

# *Renascence Editions*

Return to  
[Renascence Editions](#)

**William Shakespeare**

**Much Ado About Nothing.**

---

Note on the e-text: this [Renascence Editions](#) text is a copy of the University of Adelaide mirror of the ERIS Project plain text edition. The text is in the public domain. Content unique to this presentation is copyright © 1999 The University of Oregon.

---

1599

## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

### Dramatis Personae

Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon.  
Don John, his bastard brother.  
Claudio, a young lord of Florence.  
Benedick, a Young lord of Padua.  
Leonato, Governor of Messina.  
Antonio, an old man, his brother.  
Balthasar, attendant on Don Pedro.  
Borachio, follower of Don John.  
Conrade, follower of Don John.  
Friar Francis.  
Dogberry, a Constable.  
Verges, a Headborough.  
A Sexton.  
A Boy.

Hero, daughter to Leonato.  
Beatrice, niece to Leonato.

Margaret, waiting gentlewoman attending on Hero.  
Ursula, waiting gentlewoman attending on Hero.  
Messengers, Watch, Attendants, etc.

SCENE.--Messina.

ACT I. Scene I.

An orchard before Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato (Governor of Messina), Hero (his  
Daughter),  
and Beatrice (his Niece), with a Messenger.

Leon. I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of  
Arragon comes this  
night to Messina.

Mess. He is very near by this. He was not three  
leagues off when I  
left him.

Leon. How many gentlemen have you lost in this  
action?

Mess. But few of any sort, and none of name.

Leon. A victory is twice itself when the achiever  
brings home full  
numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed  
much honour on  
a young Florentine called Claudio.

Mess. Much deserv'd on his part, and equally  
rememb'ed by Don

Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise  
of his age, doing

in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion. He  
hath indeed

better bett'ed expectation than you must expect  
of me to tell  
you how.

Leon. He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very  
much glad of it.

Mess. I have already delivered him letters, and  
there appears much

joy in him; even so much that joy could not show  
itself modest

enough without a badge of bitterness.

Leon. Did he break out into tears?

Mess. In great measure.

Leon. A kind overflow of kindness. There are no

faces truer than

those that are so wash'd. How much better is it  
to weep at joy

than to joy at weeping!

Beat. I pray you, is Signior Mountanto return'd  
from the wars or no?

Mess. I know none of that name, lady. There was  
none such in the

army of any sort.

Leon. What is he that you ask for, niece?

Hero. My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

Mess. O, he's return'd, and as pleasant as ever he  
was.

Beat. He set up his bills here in Messina and  
challeng'd Cupid at

the flight, and my uncle's fool, reading the  
challenge,

subscrib'd for Cupid and challeng'd him at the  
burbolt. I pray

you, how many hath he kill'd and eaten in these  
wars? But how

many hath he kill'd? For indeed I promised to eat  
all of his  
killing.

Leon. Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too  
much; but he'll

be meet with you, I doubt it not.

Mess. He hath done good service, lady, in these  
wars.

Beat. You had musty victual, and he hath help to  
eat it. He is a

very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent  
stomach.

Mess. And a good soldier too, lady.

Beat. And a good soldier to a lady; but what is he  
to a lord?

Mess. A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuff'd  
with all honourable  
virtues.

Beat. It is so indeed. He is no less than a stuff'd  
man; but for

the stuffing--well, we are all mortal.

Leon. You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is  
a kind of merry

war betwixt Signior Benedick and her. They never

meet but there's

a skirmish of wit between them.

Beat. Alas, he gets nothing by that! In our last conflict four of

his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man govern'd

with one; so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let

him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse; for

it is all the wealth that he hath left to be known a reasonable

creature. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new

sworn brother.

Mess. Is't possible?

Beat. Very easily possible. He wears his faith but as the fashion

of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

Mess. I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

Beat. No. An he were, I would burn my study. But I pray you, who is

his companion? Is there no young squarer now that will make a

voyage with him to the devil?

Mess. He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

Beat. O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease! He is sooner

caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God

help the noble Claudio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will

cost him a thousand pound ere 'a be cured.

Mess. I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beat. Do, good friend.

Leon. You will never run mad, niece.

Beat. No, not till a hot January.

Mess. Don Pedro is approach'd.

Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, and John the Bastard.

Pedro. Good Signior Leonato, are you come to meet

your trouble? The

fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

Leon. Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your Grace;

for trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you depart

from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

Pedro. You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

Leon. Her mother hath many times told me so.

Bene. Were you in doubt, sir, that you ask'd her?

Leon. Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

Pedro. You have it full, Benedick. We may guess by this what you

are, being a man. Truly the lady fathers herself. Be happy, lady;

for you are like an honourable father.

Bene. If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head

on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick.

Nobody marks you.

Bene. What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?

Beat. Is it possible Disdain should die while she hath such meet

food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert

to disdain if you come in her presence.

Bene. Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of

all ladies, only you excepted; and I would I could find in my

heart that I had not a hard heart, for truly I love none.

Beat. A dear happiness to women! They would else have been troubled

with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of

your humour for that. I had rather hear my dog  
bark at a crow

than a man swear he loves me.

Bene. God keep your ladyship still in that mind! So  
some gentleman

or other shall scape a predestinate scratch'd  
face.

Beat. Scratching could not make it worse an 'twere  
such a face as

yours were.

Bene. Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

Beat. A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of  
yours.

Bene. I would my horse had the speed of your  
tongue, and so good a

continuer. But keep your way, a God's name! I  
have done.

Beat. You always end with a jade's trick. I know  
you of old.

Pedro. That is the sum of all, Leonato. Signior  
Claudio and Signior

Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you  
all. I tell him

we shall stay here at the least a month, and he  
heartly prays

some occasion may detain us longer. I dare swear  
he is no

hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

Leon. If you swear, my lord, you shall not be  
forsworn. [To Don

John] Let me bid you welcome, my lord. Being  
reconciled to the

Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

John. I thank you. I am not of many words, but I  
thank you.

Leon. Please it your Grace lead on?

Pedro. Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

Exeunt. Manent Benedick  
and Claudio.

Claud. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of  
Signior Leonato?

Bene. I noted her not, but I look'd on her.

Claud. Is she not a modest young lady?

Bene. Do you question me, as an honest man should  
do, for my simple

true judgment? or would you have me speak after  
my custom, as

being a professed tyrant to their sex?

Claud. No. I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

Bene. Why, i' faith, methinks she's too low for a  
high praise,

too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a  
great praise.

Only this commendation I can afford her, that  
were she other

than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no  
other but as she

is, I do not like her.

Claud. Thou thinkest I am in sport. I pray thee  
tell me truly how

thou lik'st her.

Bene. Would you buy her, that you enquire after her?

Claud. Can the world buy such a jewel?

Bene. Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you  
this with a sad

brow? or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell  
us Cupid is a

good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter?

Come, in what key

shall a man take you to go in the song?

Claud. In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that  
ever I look'd on.

Bene. I can see yet without spectacles, and I see  
no such matter.

There's her cousin, an she were not possess'd  
with a fury, exceeds

her as much in beauty as the first of May doth  
the last of

December. But I hope you have no intent to turn  
husband, have  
you?

Claud. I would scarce trust myself, though I had  
sworn the

contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

Bene. Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the  
world one man but

he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I  
never see a

bachelor of threescore again? Go to, i' faith! An  
thou wilt needs

thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it  
and sigh away  
Sundays.

Enter Don Pedro.

Look! Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

Pedro. What secret hath held you here, that you  
followed not to

Leonato's?

Bene. I would your Grace would constrain me to tell.

Pedro. I charge thee on thy allegiance.

Bene. You hear, Count Claudio. I can be secret as a  
dumb man, I

would have you think so; but, on my allegiance--  
mark you this--on

my allegiance! he is in love. With who? Now that  
is your Grace's

part. Mark how short his answer is: With Hero,  
Leonato's short  
daughter.

Claud. If this were so, so were it utt'ered.

Bene. Like the old tale, my lord: 'It is not so,  
nor 'twas not so;

but indeed, God forbid it should be so!'

Claud. If my passion change not shortly, God forbid  
it should be  
otherwise.

Pedro. Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very  
well worthy.

Claud. You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

Pedro. By my troth, I speak my thought.

Claud. And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

Bene. And, by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I  
spoke mine.

Claud. That I love her, I feel.

Pedro. That she is worthy, I know.

Bene. That I neither feel how she should be loved,  
nor know how she

should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot  
melt out of me.

I will die in it at the stake.

Pedro. Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the  
despite of  
beauty.



Claud. And never could maintain his part but in the  
force of his  
will.

Bene. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that  
she brought me  
up, I likewise give her most humble thanks; but  
that I will have  
a rechate winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle  
in an invisible  
baldrick, all women shall pardon me. Because I  
will not do them  
the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the  
right to trust  
none; and the fine is (for the which I may go the  
finer), I will  
live a bachelor.

Pedro. I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with  
love.

Bene. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my  
lord; not with  
love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love  
than I will get  
again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a  
ballad-maker's pen  
and hang me up at the door of a brothel house for  
the sign of  
blind Cupid.

Pedro. Well, if ever thou dost fall from this  
faith, thou wilt  
prove a notable argument.

Bene. If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and  
shoot at me; and  
he that hits me, let him be clapp'd on the  
shoulder and call'd  
Adam.

Pedro. Well, as time shall try.

'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.'

Bene. The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible  
Benedick bear  
it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my  
forehead, and  
let me be vilely painted, and in such great  
letters as they write  
'Here is good horse to hire,' let them signify  
under my sign

'Here you may see Benedick the married man.'

Claud. If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

Pedro. Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou

wilt quake for this shortly.

Bene. I look for an earthquake too then.

Pedro. Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the meantime,

good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's, commend me to him and

tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made

great preparation.

Bene. I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy; and

so I commit you--

Claud. To the tuition of God. From my house--if I had it--

Pedro. The sixth of July. Your loving friend, Benedick.

Bene. Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is

sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly

basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any further, examine

your conscience. And so I leave you.

Exit.

Claud. My liege, your Highness now may do me good.

Pedro. My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how,

And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn

Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

Claud. Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

Pedro. No child but Hero; she's his only heir.

Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

Claud. O my lord,

When you went onward on this ended action,

I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,

That lik'd, but had a rougher task in hand

Than to drive liking to the name of love;

But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts

Have left their places vacant, in their rooms

Come thronging soft and delicate desires,

All prompting me how fair young Hero is,

Saying I lik'd her ere I went to wars.  
Pedro. Thou wilt be like a lover presently  
And tire the hearer with a book of words.  
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,  
And I will break with her and with her father,  
And thou shalt have her. Wast not to this end  
That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?  
Claud. How sweetly you do minister to love,  
That know love's grief by his complexion!  
But lest my liking might too sudden seem,  
I would have salv'd it with a longer treatise.  
Pedro. What need the bridge much broader than the  
flood?  
The fairest grant is the necessity.  
Look, what will serve is fit. 'Tis once, thou  
lovest,  
And I will fit thee with the remedy.  
I know we shall have revelling to-night.  
I will assume thy part in some disguise  
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,  
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart  
And take her hearing prisoner with the force  
And strong encounter of my amorous tale.  
Then after to her father will I break,  
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.  
In practice let us put it  
presently. Exeunt.

Scene II.

A room in Leonato's house.

Enter [at one door] Leonato and [at another door,  
Antonio]

an old man, brother to Leonato.

Leon. How now, brother? Where is my cousin your  
son? Hath he

provided this music?

Ant. He is very busy about it. But, brother, I can  
tell you strange

news that you yet dreamt not of.

Leon. Are they good?

Ant. As the event stamps them; but they have a good  
cover, they

show well outward. The Prince and Count Claudio,  
walking in a

thick-pleached alley in mine orchard, were thus  
much overheard by

a man of mine: the Prince discovered to Claudio  
that he loved my

niece your daughter and meant to acknowledge it  
this night in a

dance, and if he found her accordant, he meant to  
take the

present time by the top and instantly break with  
you of it.

Leon. Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

Ant. A good sharp fellow. I will send for him, and  
question him

yourself.

Leon. No, no. We will hold it as a dream till it  
appear itself; but

I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may  
be the better

prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be  
true. Go you and

tell her of it.

[Exit Antonio.]

[Enter Antonio's Son with a Musician, and  
others.]

[To the Son] Cousin, you know what you have to do.

--[To the Musician] O, I cry you mercy, friend.

Go you with me,

and I will use your skill.--Good cousin, have a  
care this busy

time.

Exeunt.

### Scene III.

Another room in Leonato's house.]

Enter Sir John the Bastard and Conrade, his  
companion.

Con. What the goodyear, my lord! Why are you thus  
out of measure

sad?

John. There is no measure in the occasion that  
breeds; therefore

the sadness is without limit.

Con. You should hear reason.

John. And when I have heard it, what blessings brings it?

Con. If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance.

John. I wonder that thou (being, as thou say'st thou art, born

under Saturn) goest about to apply a moral medicine to a

mortifying mischief. I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when

I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have

stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy,

and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no

man in his humour.

Con. Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may

do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against

your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where

it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair

weather that you make yourself. It is needful that you frame the

season for your own harvest.

John. I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace,

and it better fits my blood to be disdain'd of all than to

fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, though I cannot

be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but

I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle and

enfranchis'd with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in

my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I

would do my liking. In the meantime let me be that I am, and seek

not to alter me.

Con. Can you make no use of your discontent?

John. I make all use of it, for I use it only.

Enter Borachio.

Who comes here? What news, Borachio?

Bora. I came yonder from a great supper. The Prince  
your brother is

royally entertain'd by Leonato, and I can give  
you intelligence  
of an intended marriage.

John. Will it serve for any model to build mischief  
on?

What is he for a fool that betroths himself to  
unquietness?

Bora. Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

John. Who? the most exquisite Claudio?

Bora. Even he.

John. A proper squire! And who? and who? which way  
looks he?

Bora. Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of  
Leonato.

John. A very forward March-chick! How came you to  
this?

Bora. Being entertain'd for a perfumer, as I was  
smoking a musty

room, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in  
hand in sad

conference. I whipt me behind the arras and there  
heard it agreed

upon that the Prince should woo Hero for himself,  
and having

obtain'd her, give her to Count Claudio.

John. Come, come, let us thither. This may prove  
food to my

displeasure. That young start-up hath all the  
glory of my

overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless  
myself every way.

You are both sure, and will assist me?

Con. To the death, my lord.

John. Let us to the great supper. Their cheer is  
the greater that

I am subdued. Would the cook were o' my mind!

Shall we go prove  
what's to be done?  
Bora. We'll wait upon your lordship.

Exeunt.

ACT II. Scene I.  
A hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato, [Antonio] his Brother, Hero his  
Daughter, and  
Beatrice his Niece, and a Kinsman; [also Margaret  
and Ursula].

Leon. Was not Count John here at supper?

Ant. I saw him not.

Beat. How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can  
see him but I am

heart-burn'd an hour after.

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

Beat. He were an excellent man that were made just  
in the midway

between him and Benedick. The one is too like an  
image and says

nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest  
son, evermore  
tattling.

Leon. Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count  
John's mouth,

and half Count John's melancholy in Signior  
Benedick's face--

Beat. With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and  
money enough in

his purse, such a man would win any woman in the  
world--if 'a

could get her good will.

Leon. By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee  
a husband if

thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

Ant. In faith, she's too curst.

Beat. Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen  
God's sending

that way, for it is said, 'God sends a curst cow  
short horns,'

but to a cow too curst he sends none.

Leon. So, by being too curst, God will send you no  
horns.

Beat. Just, if he send me no husband; for the which blessing I am

at him upon my knees every morning and evening.  
Lord, I could not

endure a husband with a beard on his face. I had rather lie in  
the woollen!

Leon. You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

Beat. What should I do with him? dress him in my apparel and make

him my waiting gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a

youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man; and he that

is more than a youth is not for me; and he that is less than a

man, I am not for him. Therefore I will even take sixpence in

earnest of the berrord and lead his apes into hell.

Leon. Well then, go you into hell?

Beat. No; but to the gate, and there will the devil meet me like an

old cuckold with horns on his head, and say 'Get you to heaven,

Beatrice, get you to heaven. Here's no place for you maids.' So

deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter-- for the heavens.

He shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry

as the day is long.

Ant. [to Hero] Well, niece, I trust you will be rul'd by your

father.

Beat. Yes faith. It is my cousin's duty to make cursy and say,

'Father, as it please you.' But yet for all that, cousin, let him

be a handsome fellow, or else make another cursy, and say,

'Father, as it please me.'

Leon. Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

Beat. Not till God make men of some other metal



than earth. Would

it not grieve a woman to be overmaster'd with a  
piece of valiant

dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of  
wayward marl?

No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my  
brethren, and truly I

hold it a sin to match in my kinred.

Leon. Daughter, remember what I told you. If the  
Prince do solicit

you in that kind, you know your answer.

Beat. The fault will be in the music, cousin, if  
you be not wooed

in good time. If the Prince be too important,  
tell him there is

measure in everything, and so dance out the  
answer. For, hear me,

Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a  
Scotch jig, a

measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot  
and hasty like

a Scotch jig--and full as fantastical; the  
wedding, mannerly

modest, as a measure, full of state and  
ancientry; and then comes

Repentance and with his bad legs falls into the  
cinque-pace

faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

Leon. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

Beat. I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church  
by daylight.

Leon. The revellers are ent'ring, brother. Make  
good room.

[Exit

Antonio.]

Enter, [masked,] Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick,  
and Balthasar.

[With them enter Antonio, also masked. After  
them enter]

Don John [and Borachio (without masks), who  
stand aside

and look on during the dance].

Pedro. Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

Hero. So you walk softly and look sweetly and say nothing,

I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

Pedro. With me in your company?

Hero. I may say so when I please.

Pedro. And when please you to say so?

Hero. When I like your favour, for God defend the lute should be like the case!

Pedro. My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.

Hero. Why then, your visor should be thatch'd.

Pedro. Speak low if you speak love. [Takes her aside.]

Balth. Well, I would you did like me.

Marg. So would not I for your own sake, for I have many ill qualities.

Balth. Which is one?

Marg. I say my prayers aloud.

Balth. I love you the better. The hearers may cry Amen.

Marg. God match me with a good dancer!

Balth. Amen.

Marg. And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done!

Answer, clerk.

Balth. No more words. The clerk is answered. [Takes her aside.]

Urs. I know you well enough. You are Signior Antonio.

Ant. At a word, I am not.

Urs. I know you by the wagging of your head.

Ant. To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

Urs. You could never do him so ill-well unless you were the very

man. Here's his dry hand up and down. You are he, you are he!

Ant. At a word, I am not.

Urs. Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent

wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum you are he. Graces will

appear, and there's an end. [ They  
step aside.]

Beat. Will you not tell me who told you so?

Bene. No, you shall pardon me.

Beat. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Bene. Not now.

Beat. That I was disdainful, and that I had my good  
wit out of the

'Hundred Merry Tales.' Well, this was Signior  
Benedick that said

so.

Bene. What's he?

Beat. I am sure you know him well enough.

Bene. Not I, believe me.

Beat. Did he never make you laugh?

Bene. I pray you, what is he?

Beat. Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull  
fool. Only his

gift is in devising impossible slanders. None but  
libertines

delight in him; and the commendation is not in  
his wit, but in

his villany; for he both pleases men and angers  
them, and then

they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is  
in the fleet.

I would he had boarded me.

Bene. When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what  
you say.

Beat. Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two  
on me; which

peradventure, not marked or not laugh'd at,  
strikes him into

melancholy; and then there's a partridge wing  
saved, for the fool

will eat no supper that night.

[Music.]

We must follow the leaders.

Bene. In every good thing.

Beat. Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave  
them at the next  
turning.

Dance. Exeunt (all but Don John, Borachio,  
and Claudio].

John. Sure my brother is amorous on Hero and hath

withdrawn her

father to break with him about it. The ladies  
follow her and but  
one visor remains.

Bora. And that is Claudio. I know him by his  
bearing.

John. Are you not Signior Benedick?

Claud. You know me well. I am he.

John. Signior, you are very near my brother in his  
love. He is

enamour'd on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from  
her; she is no

equal for his birth. You may do the part of an  
honest man in it.

Claud. How know you he loves her?

John. I heard him swear his affection.

Bora. So did I too, and he swore he would marry her  
tonight.

John. Come, let us to the banquet.

Exeunt.

Manet Claudio.

Claud. Thus answer I in name of Benedick

But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.

[Unmasks.]

'Tis certain so. The Prince wooes for himself.  
Friendship is constant in all other things  
Save in the office and affairs of love.  
Therefore all hearts in love use their own  
tongues;

Let every eye negotiate for itself  
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch  
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.  
This is an accident of hourly proof,  
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore Hero!

Enter Benedick [unmasked].

Bene. Count Claudio?

Claud. Yea, the same.

Bene. Come, will you go with me?

Claud. Whither?

Bene. Even to the next willow, about your own  
business, County. What

fashion will you wear the garland of? about your  
neck, like an

usurer's chain? or under your arm, like a  
lieutenant's scarf? You  
must wear it one way, for the Prince hath got  
your Hero.

Claud. I wish him joy of her.

Bene. Why, that's spoken like an honest drovier. So  
they sell

bullocks. But did you think the Prince would have  
served you  
thus?

Claud. I pray you leave me.

Bene. Ho! now you strike like the blind man! 'Twas  
the boy that

stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.

Claud. If it will not be, I'll leave  
you. Exit.

Bene. Alas, poor hurt fowl! now will he creep into  
sedges. But,

that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not  
know me! The

Prince's fool! Ha! it may be I go under that  
title because I am

merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong. I  
am not so

reputed. It is the base (though bitter)  
disposition of Beatrice

that puts the world into her person and so gives  
me out. Well,

I'll be revenged as I may.

Enter Don Pedro.

Pedro. Now, signior, where's the Count? Did you see  
him?

Bene. Troth, my lord, I have played the part of  
Lady Fame, I found

him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren. I  
told him, and I

think I told him true, that your Grace had got  
the good will of

this young lady, and I off'red him my company to  
a willow tree,

either to make him a garland, as being forsaken,  
or to bind him

up a rod, as being worthy to be whipt.

Pedro. To be whipt? What's his fault?

Bene. The flat transgression of a schoolboy who,  
being overjoyed  
with finding a bird's nest, shows it his  
companion, and he steals  
it.

Pedro. Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The  
transgression is  
in the stealer.

Bene. Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been  
made, and the  
garland too; for the garland he might have worn  
himself, and the  
rod he might have bestowed on you, who, as I take  
it, have stol'n  
his bird's nest.

Pedro. I will but teach them to sing and restore  
them to the owner.

Bene. If their singing answer your saying, by my  
faith you say  
honestly.

Pedro. The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The  
gentleman that  
danc'd with her told her she is much wrong'd by  
you.

Bene. O, she misus'd me past the endurance of a  
block! An oak but  
with one green leaf on it would have answered  
her; my very visor  
began to assume life and scold with her. She told  
me, not  
thinking I had been myself, that I was the  
Prince's jester, that  
I was duller than a great thaw; huddling jest  
upon jest with such  
impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a  
man at a mark,  
with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks  
poniards, and every  
word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her  
terminations,  
there were no living near her; she would infect  
to the North  
Star. I would not marry her though she were  
endowed with all that

Adam had left him before he transgress'd. She  
would have made  
Hercules have turn'd spit, yea, and have cleft  
his club to make  
the fire too. Come, talk not of her. You shall  
find her the  
infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some  
scholar would  
conjure her, for certainly, while she is here, a  
man may live as  
quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin  
upon purpose,  
because they would go thither; so indeed all  
disquiet, horror,  
and perturbation follows her.

Enter Claudio and Beatrice, Leonato, Hero.

Pedro. Look, here she comes.

Bene. Will your Grace command me any service to the  
world's end? I

will go on the slightest errand now to the  
Antipodes that you can

devise to send me on; I will fetch you a  
toothpicker now from the

furthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of  
Prester John's

foot; fetch you a hair off the great Cham's  
beard; do you any

embassage to the Pygmies--rather than hold three  
words'

conference with this harpy. You have no  
employment for me?

Pedro. None, but to desire your good company.

Bene. O God, sir, here's a dish I love not! I  
cannot endure my Lady

Tongue.

[Exit.]

Pedro. Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of  
Signior

Benedick.

Beat. Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile, and I  
gave him use for

it--a double heart for his single one. Marry,  
once before he won

it of me with false dice; therefore your Grace  
may well say I  
have lost it.

Pedro. You have put him down, lady; you have put  
him down.

Beat. So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest  
I should prove

the mother of fools. I have brought Count  
Claudio, whom you sent  
me to seek.

Pedro. Why, how now, Count? Wherefore are you sad?

Claud. Not sad, my lord.

Pedro. How then? sick?

Claud. Neither, my lord.

Beat. The Count is neither sad, nor sick, nor  
merry, nor well; but  
civil count--civil as an orange, and something of  
that jealous  
complexion.

Pedro. I' faith, lady, I think your blazon to be  
true; though I'll

be sworn, if he be so, his conceit is false.

Here, Claudio, I

have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won. I  
have broke with

her father, and his good will obtained. Name the  
day of marriage,

and God give thee joy!

Leon. Count, take of me my daughter, and with her  
my fortunes. His

Grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen  
to it!

Beat. Speak, Count, 'tis your cue.

Claud. Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I  
were but little

happy if I could say how much. Lady, as you are  
mine, I am yours.

I give away myself for you and dote upon the  
exchange.

Beat. Speak, cousin; or, if you cannot, stop his  
mouth with a kiss

and let not him speak neither.

Pedro. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

Beat. Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps  
on the windy



side of care. My cousin tells him in his ear that  
he is in her  
heart.

Claud. And so she doth, cousin.

Beat. Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one  
to the world but

I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and  
cry 'Heigh-ho for  
a husband!'

Pedro. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

Beat. I would rather have one of your father's  
getting. Hath your

Grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got  
excellent

husbands, if a maid could come by them.

Pedro. Will you have me, lady?

Beat. No, my lord, unless I might have another for  
working days:

your Grace is too costly to wear every day. But I  
beseech your

Grace pardon me. I was born to speak all mirth  
and no matter.

Pedro. Your silence most offends me, and to be  
merry best becomes

you, for out o' question you were born in a merry  
hour.

Beat. No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then  
there was a star

danc'd, and under that was I born. Cousins, God  
give you joy!

Leon. Niece, will you look to those things I told  
you of?

Beat. I cry you mercy, uncle, By your Grace's  
pardon. Exit.

Pedro. By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

Leon. There's little of the melancholy element in  
her, my lord. She

is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever  
sad then; for I

have heard my daughter say she hath often dreamt  
of unhappiness

and wak'd herself with laughing.

Pedro. She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

Leon. O, by no means! She mocks all her wooers out  
of suit.

Pedro. She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

Leon. O Lord, my lord! if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

Pedro. County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

Claud. To-morrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

Leon. Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just

sevensnight; and a time too brief too, to have all things answer my mind.

Pedro. Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing;

but I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us.

I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labours, which

is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a

mountain of affection th' one with th' other. I would fain have

it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it if you three will

but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

Leon. My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

Claud. And I, my lord.

Pedro. And you too, gentle Hero?

Hero. I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

Pedro. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know.

Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved

valour, and confirm'd honesty. I will teach you how to humour

your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I,

[to Leonato and Claudio] with your two helps,

will so practise on

Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and  
his queasy

stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If  
we can do this,

Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be  
ours, for we are

the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will  
tell you my drift.

Exeunt.

Scene II.

A hall in Leonato's house.

Enter [Don] John and Borachio.

John. It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the  
daughter of

Leonato.

Bora. Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

John. Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be  
med'cinable to me.

I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever  
comes athwart his

affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou  
cross this  
marriage?

Bora. Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that  
no dishonesty  
shall appear in me.

John. Show me briefly how.

Bora. I think I told your lordship, a year since,  
how much I am in  
the favour of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman  
to Hero.

John. I remember.

Bora. I can, at any unseasonable instant of the  
night, appoint her  
to look out at her lady's chamber window.

John. What life is in that to be the death of this  
marriage?

Bora. The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go  
you to the

Prince your brother; spare not to tell him that  
he hath wronged  
his honour in marrying the renowned Claudio

(whose estimation do  
you mightily hold up) to a contaminated stale,  
such a one as  
Hero.

John. What proof shall I make of that?

Bora. Proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex  
Claudio, to undo

Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other  
issue?

John. Only to despite them I will endeavour  
anything.

Bora. Go then; find me a meet hour to draw Don  
Pedro and the Count

Claudio alone; tell them that you know that Hero  
loves me; intend

a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio,  
as--in love of

your brother's honour, who hath made this match,  
and his friend's

reputation, who is thus like to be cozen'd with  
the semblance of

a maid--that you have discover'd thus. They will  
scarcely believe

this without trial. Offer them instances; which  
shall bear no

less likelihood than to see me at her chamber  
window, hear me

call Margaret Hero, hear Margaret term me  
Claudio; and bring them

to see this the very night before the intended  
wedding (for in

the meantime I will so fashion the matter that  
Hero shall be

absent) and there shall appear such seeming truth  
of Hero's

disloyalty that jealousy shall be call'd  
assurance and all the  
preparation overthrown.

John. Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I  
will put it in

practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy  
fee is a

thousand ducats.

Bora. Be you constant in the accusation, and my  
cunning shall not

shame me.

John. I will presently go learn their day of marriage.

Exeunt.

Scene III.  
Leonato's orchard.

Enter Benedick alone.

Bene. Boy!

[Enter Boy.]

Boy. Signior?

Bene. In my chamber window lies a book. Bring it hither to me in the orchard.

Boy. I am here already, sir.

Bene. I know that, but I would have thee hence and here again.

(Exit Boy.) I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much

another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love,

will, after he hath laugh'd at such shallow follies in others,

become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love; and such

a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him

but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor

and the pipe. I have known when he would have walk'd ten mile

afoot to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake

carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain

and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is

he turn'd orthography; his words are a very fantastical banquet--

just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted and see with

these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not. I will

not be sworn but

love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take  
my oath on it,

till he have made an oyster of me he shall never  
make me such a

fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another  
is wise, yet I am

well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till  
all graces be in

one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace.  
Rich she shall

be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous,  
or I'll never

cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her;  
mild, or come not

near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good  
discourse, an

excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what  
colour it

please God. Ha, the Prince and Monsieur Love! I  
will hide me in

the  
arbour.

[Hides.]

Enter Don Pedro, Leonato, Claudio.

Music [within].

Pedro. Come, shall we hear this music?

Claud. Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,  
As hush'd on purpose to grace harmony!

Pedro. See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

Claud. O, very well, my lord. The music ended,  
We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.

Enter Balthasar with Music.

Pedro. Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

Balth. O, good my lord, tax not so bad a voice  
To slander music any more than once.

Pedro. It is the witness still of excellency  
To put a strange face on his own perfection.

I pray thee sing, and let me woo no more.

Balth. Because you talk of wooing, I will sing,  
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit

To her he thinks not worthy, yet he wooes,  
Yet will he swear he loves.

Pedro. Nay, pray thee come;  
Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,  
Do it in notes.

Balth. Note this before my notes:

There's not a note of mine that's worth the  
noting.

Pedro. Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks!  
Note notes, forsooth, and  
nothing! [Music.]

Bene. [aside] Now divine air! Now is his soul  
ravish'd! Is it not  
strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out  
of men's bodies?

Well, a horn for my money, when all's done.

[Balthasar  
sings.]

#### The Song.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more!  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea, and one on shore;  
To one thing constant never.  
Then sigh not so,  
But let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,  
Of dumps so dull and heavy!  
The fraud of men was ever so,  
Since summer first was leavy.  
Then sigh not so, &c.

Pedro. By my troth, a good song.

Balth. And an ill singer, my lord.

Pedro. Ha, no, no, faith! Thou sing'st well enough  
for a shift.

Bene. [aside] An he had been a dog that should have  
howl'd thus,

they would have hang'd him; and I pray God his  
bad voice bode no  
mischief. I had as live have heard the night

raven, come what

plague could have come after it.

Pedro. Yea, marry. Dost thou hear, Balthasar? I  
pray thee get us

some excellent music; for to-morrow night we  
would have it at the

Lady Hero's chamber window.

Balth. The best I can, my lord.

Pedro. Do so. Farewell.

Exit Balthasar [with  
Musicians].

Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of  
to-day? that

your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior  
Benedick?

Claud. O, ay!-[Aside to Pedro] Stalk on, stalk on;  
the fowl sits.

--I did never think that lady would have loved  
any man.

Leon. No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that  
she should so dote

on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward  
behaviours

seem'd ever to abhor.

Bene. [aside] Is't possible? Sits the wind in that  
corner?

Leon. By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to  
think of it, but

that she loves him with an enraged affection. It  
is past the

infinite of thought.

Pedro. May be she doth but counterfeit.

Claud. Faith, like enough.

Leon. O God, counterfeit? There was never  
counterfeit of passion

came so near the life of passion as she discovers  
it.

Pedro. Why, what effects of passion shows she?

Claud. [aside] Bait the hook well! This fish will  
bite.

Leon. What effects, my lord? She will sit you--you  
heard my

daughter tell you how.

Claud. She did indeed.

Pedro. How, how, I pray you? You amaze me. I would



have thought her

spirit had been invincible against all assaults  
of affection.

Leon. I would have sworn it had, my lord--  
especially against

Benedick.

Bene. [aside] I should think this a gull but that  
the white-bearded

fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide  
himself in such  
reverence.

Claud. [aside] He hath ta'en th' infection. Hold it  
up.

Pedro. Hath she made her affection known to  
Benedick?

Leon. No, and swears she never will. That's her  
torment.

Claud. 'Tis true indeed. So your daughter says.  
'Shall I,' says

she, 'that have so oft encount'ed him with  
scorn, write to him  
that I love him?'"

Leon. This says she now when she is beginning to  
write to him; for

she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will  
she sit in her

smock till she have writ a sheet of paper. My  
daughter tells us  
all.

Claud. Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember  
a pretty jest

your daughter told us of.

Leon. O, when she had writ it, and was reading it  
over, she found

'Benedick' and 'Beatrice' between the sheet?

Claud. That.

Leon. O, she tore the letter into a thousand  
halfpence, rail'd at

herself that she should be so immodest to write  
to one that she

knew would flout her. 'I measure him,' says she,  
'by my own

spirit; for I should flout him if he writ to me.  
Yea, though I

love him, I should.'

Claud. Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps,  
sobs, beats her

heart, tears her hair, prays, curses--'O sweet  
Benedick! God give  
me patience!'

Leon. She doth indeed; my daughter says so. And the  
ecstasy hath so

much overborne her that my daughter is sometime  
afear'd she will

do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very  
true.

Pedro. It were good that Benedick knew of it by  
some other, if she

will not discover it.

Claud. To what end? He would make but a sport of it  
and torment the

poor lady worse.

Pedro. An he should, it were an alms to hang him!  
She's an

excellent sweet lady, and (out of all suspicion)  
she is virtuous.

Claud. And she is exceeding wise.

Pedro. In everything but in loving Benedick.

Leon. O, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so  
tender a body,

we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the  
victory. I am sorry

for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle  
and her guardian.

Pedro. I would she had bestowed this dotage on me.  
I would have

daff'd all other respects and made her half  
myself. I pray you

tell Benedick of it and hear what 'a will say.

Leon. Were it good, think you?

Claud. Hero thinks surely she will die; for she  
says she will die

if he love her not, and she will die ere she make  
her love known,

and she will die, if he woo her, rather than she  
will bate one

breath of her accustomed crossness.

Pedro. She doth well. If she should make tender of  
her love, 'tis

very possible he'll scorn it; for the man (as you

know all) hath

a contemptible spirit.

Claud. He is a very proper man.

Pedro. He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

Claud. Before God! and in my mind, very wise.

Pedro. He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

Claud. And I take him to be valiant.

Pedro. As Hector, I assure you; and in the managing of quarrels you

may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great

discretion, or undertakes them with a most Christianlike fear.

Leon. If he do fear God, 'a must necessarily keep peace. If he

break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and

trembling.

Pedro. And so will he do; for the man doth fear God, howsoever it

seems not in him by some large jests he will make. Well, I am

sorry for your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick and tell him of

her love?

Claud. Never tell him, my lord. Let her wear it out with good

counsel.

Leon. Nay, that's impossible; she may wear her heart out first.

Pedro. Well, we will hear further of it by your daughter. Let it

cool the while. I love Benedick well, and I could wish he would

modestly examine himself to see how much he is unworthy so good a

lady.

Leon. My lord, will you .walk? Dinner is ready.

[They

walk away.]

Claud. If he dote on her upon this, I will never trust my

expectation.

Pedro. Let there be the same net spread for her,

and that must your  
daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport  
will be, when they  
hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no  
such matter.  
That's the scene that I would see, which will be  
merely a dumb  
show. Let us send her to call him in to dinner.  
Exeunt [Don Pedro, Claudio,  
and Leonato].

[Benedick advances from the arbour.]

Bene. This can be no trick. The conference was  
sadly borne; they  
have the truth of this from Hero; they seem to  
pity the lady.  
It seems her affections have their full bent.  
Love me? Why, it  
must be requited. I hear how I am censur'd. They  
say I will bear  
myself proudly if I perceive the love come from  
her. They say too  
that she will rather die than give any sign of  
affection. I did  
never think to marry. I must not seem proud.  
Happy are they that  
hear their detractions and can put them to  
mending. They say the  
lady is fair--'tis a truth, I can bear them  
witness; and virtuous  
--'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for  
loving me--by  
my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no  
great argument of  
her folly, for I will be horribly in love with  
her. I may chance  
have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken  
on me because I  
have railed so long against marriage. But doth  
not the appetite  
alters? A man loves the meat in his youth that he  
cannot endure  
in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these  
paper bullets of

the brain awe a man from the career of his  
humour? No, the world  
must be peopled. When I said I would die a  
bachelor, I did not  
think I should live till I were married.

Enter Beatrice.

Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair  
lady! I do spy  
some marks of love in her.

Beat. Against my will I am sent to bid You come in  
to dinner.

Bene. Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

Beat. I took no more pains for those thanks than  
you take pains to

thank me. If it had been painful, I would not  
have come.

Bene. You take pleasure then in the message?

Beat. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a  
knives point, and

choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signior.  
Fare you well.

Exit.

Bene. Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you  
come in to dinner.'

There's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more  
pains for those

thanks than you took pains to thank me.' That's  
as much as to

say, 'Any pains that I take for you is as easy as  
thanks.' If I

do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do  
not love her, I

am a Jew. I will go get her  
picture.

Exit.

ACT III. Scene I.

Leonato's orchard.

Enter Hero and two Gentlewomen, Margaret and  
Ursula.

Hero. Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour.

There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice

Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.

Whisper her ear and tell her, I and Ursley  
Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse  
Is all of her. Say that thou overheard'st us;  
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,  
Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun,  
Forbid the sun to enter--like favourites,  
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride  
Against that power that bred it. There will she  
hide her

To listen our propose. This is thy office.

Bear thee well in it and leave us alone.

Marg. I'll make her come, I warrant you,  
presently. [Exit.]

Hero. Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,  
As we do trace this alley up and down,  
Our talk must only be of Benedick.  
When I do name him, let it be thy part  
To praise him more than ever man did merit.  
My talk to thee must be how Benedick  
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter  
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,  
That only wounds by hearsay.

[Enter Beatrice.]

Now begin;

For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs  
Close by the ground, to hear our conference.

[Beatrice hides in the arbour].

Urs. The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.  
So angle we for Beatrice, who even now  
Is couched in the woodbine coverture.  
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

Hero. Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing  
Of the false sweet bait that we lay for it.

[They approach

the arbour.]

No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful.  
I know her spirits are as coy and wild  
As haggards of the rock.

Urs. But are you sure

That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?  
Hero. So says the Prince, and my new-trothed lord.  
Urs. And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?  
Hero. They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;  
But I persuaded them, if they lov'd Benedick,  
To wish him wrestle with affection  
And never to let Beatrice know of it.  
Urs. Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman  
Deserve as full, as fortunate a bed  
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?  
Hero. O god of love! I know he doth deserve  
As much as may be yielded to a man:  
But Nature never fram'd a woman's heart  
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.  
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,  
Misprizing what they look on; and her wit  
Values itself so highly that to her  
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,  
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,  
She is so self-endear'd.  
Urs. Sure I think so;  
And therefore certainly it were not good  
She knew his love, lest she'll make sport at it.  
Hero. Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,  
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featur'd,  
But she would spell him backward. If fair-fac'd,  
She would swear the gentleman should be her  
sister;  
If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,  
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;  
If low, an agate very vilely cut;  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;  
If silent, why, a block moved with none.  
So turns she every man the wrong side out  
And never gives to truth and virtue that  
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.  
Urs. Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.  
Hero. No, not to be so odd, and from all fashions,  
As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable.  
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,  
She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me  
Out of myself, press me to death with wit!  
Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,  
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.  
It were a better death than die with mocks,

Which is as bad as die with tickling.  
Urs. Yet tell her of it. Hear what she will say.  
Hero. No; rather I will go to Benedick  
And counsel him to fight against his passion.  
And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders  
To stain my cousin with. One doth not know  
How much an ill word may empoison liking.  
Urs. O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!  
She cannot be so much without true judgment  
(Having so swift and excellent a wit  
As she is priz'd to have) as to refuse  
So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.  
Hero. He is the only man of Italy,  
Always excepted my dear Claudio.  
Urs. I pray you be not angry with me, madam,  
Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,  
For shape, for bearing, argument, and valour,  
Goes foremost in report through Italy.  
Hero. Indeed he hath an excellent good name.  
Urs. His excellence did earn it ere he had it.  
When are you married, madam?

Hero. Why, every day to-morrow! Come, go in.  
I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel  
Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.

[They

walk away.]

Urs. She's lim'd, I warrant you! We have caught  
her, madam.

Hero. If it prove so, then loving goes by haps;  
Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.  
Exeunt [Hero

and Ursula].

[Beatrice advances from the arbour.]

Beat. What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?  
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!  
No glory lives behind the back of such.  
And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,  
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.  
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee  
To bind our loves up in a holy band;  
For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
Believe it better than



reportingly.

Exit.

Scene II.

A room in Leonato's house.

Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, and Leonato.

Pedro. I do but stay till your marriage be consummate, and then go

I toward Arragon.

Claud. I'll bring you thither, my lord, if you'll vouchsafe me.

Pedro. Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your

marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear

it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company; for, from

the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth.

He hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bowstring, and the little

hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a heart as sound as a

bell; and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinks,

his tongue speaks.

Bene. Gallants, I am not as I have been.

Leon. So say I. Methinks you are sadder.

Claud. I hope he be in love.

Pedro. Hang him, truant! There's no true drop of blood in him to be

truly touch'd with love. If he be sad, he wants money.

Bene. I have the toothache.

Pedro. Draw it.

Bene. Hang it!

Claud. You must hang it first and draw it afterwards.

Pedro. What? sigh for the toothache?

Leon. Where is but a humour or a worm.

Bene. Well, every one can master a grief but he that has it.

Claud. Yet say I he is in love.

Pedro. There is no appearance of fancy in him, unless it be a fancy

that he hath to strange disguises; as to be a Dutchman to-day, a

Frenchman to-morrow; or in the shape of two countries at once, as

a German from the waist downward, all slops, and a Spaniard from

the hip upward, no doublet. Unless he have a fancy to this

foolery, as it appears he hath, he is no fool for fancy, as you

would have it appear he is.

Claud. If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing

old signs. 'A brushes his hat o' mornings. What should that bode?

Pedro. Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

Claud. No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him, and the

old ornament of his cheek hath already stuff'd tennis balls.

Leon. Indeed he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.

Pedro. Nay, 'a rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by

that?

Claud. That's as much as to say, the sweet youth's in love.

Pedro. The greatest note of it is his melancholy.

Claud. And when was he wont to wash his face?

Pedro. Yea, or to paint himself? for the which I hear what they say of him.

Claud. Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is new-crept into a

lutestring, and now govern'd by stops.

Pedro. Indeed that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude,

he is in love.

Claud. Nay, but I know who loves him.

Pedro. That would I know too. I warrant, one that knows him not.

Claud. Yes, and his ill conditions; and in despite of all, dies for him.

Pedro. She shall be buried with her face upwards.

Bene. Yet is this no charm for the toothache. Old signior, walk  
aside with me. I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak

to you, which these hobby-horses must not hear.

[Exeunt Benedick

and Leonato.]

Pedro. For my life, to break with him about Beatrice!

Claud. 'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this played their

parts with Beatrice, and then the two bears will not bite one

another when they meet.

Enter John the Bastard.

John. My lord and brother, God save you.

Pedro. Good den, brother.

John. If your leisure serv'd, I would speak with you.

Pedro. In private?

John. If it please you. Yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I

would speak of concerns him.

Pedro. What's the matter?

John. [to Claudio] Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?

Pedro. You know he does.

John. I know not that, when he knows what I know.

Claud. If there be any impediment, I pray you discover it.

John. You may think I love you not. Let that appear hereafter, and

aim better at me by that I now will manifest. For my brother, I

think he holds you well and in dearness of heart hath help to

effect your ensuing marriage--surely suit ill spent and labour

ill bestowed!

Pedro. Why, what's the matter?

John. I came hither to tell you, and, circumstances short'ned (for

she has been too long a-talking of), the lady is

disloyal.

Claud. Who? Hero?

John. Even she--Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

Claud. Disloyal?

John. The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. I could say

she were worse; think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to

it. Wonder not till further warrant. Go but with me to-night, you

shall see her chamber window ent'red, even the night before her

wedding day. If you love her then, to-morrow wed her. But it

would better fit your honour to change your mind.

Claud. May this be so?

Pedro. I will not think it.

John. If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you

know. If you will follow me, I will show you enough; and when you

have seen more and heard more, proceed accordingly.

Claud. If I see anything to-night why I should not marry her

to-morrow, in the congregation where I should wed, there will I

shame her.

Pedro. And, as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with

thee to disgrace her.

John. I will disparage her no farther till you are my witnesses.

Bear it coldly but till midnight, and let the issue show itself.

Pedro. O day untowardly turned!

Claud. O mischief strangely thwarting!

John. O plague right well prevented!

So will you say when you have seen the Sequel.

Exeunt.

Scene III.

A street.

Enter Dogberry and his compartner [Verges], with

the Watch.

Dog. Are you good men and true?

Verg. Yea, or else it were pity but they should  
suffer salvation,  
body and soul.

Dog. Nay, that were a punishment too good for them  
if they should  
have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the  
Prince's watch.

Verg. Well, give them their charge, neighbour  
Dogberry.

Dog. First, who think you the most desartless man  
to be constable?

1. Watch. Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal; for  
they can write  
and read.

Dog. Come hither, neighbour Seacoal. God hath  
bless'd you with a  
good name. To be a well-favoured man is the gift  
of fortune, but  
to write and read comes by nature.

2. Watch. Both which, Master Constable--

Dog. You have. I knew it would be your answer.  
Well, for your

favour, sir, why, give God thanks and make no  
boast of it; and

for your writing and reading, let that appear  
when there is no

need of such vanity. You are thought here to be  
the most

senseless and fit man for the constable of the  
watch. Therefore

bear you the lanthorn. This is your charge: you  
shall comprehend

all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in  
the Prince's  
name.

2. Watch. How if 'a will not stand?

Dog. Why then, take no note of him, but let him go,  
and presently

call the rest of the watch together and thank God  
you are rid of  
a knave.

Verg. If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is

none of the

Prince's subjects.

Dog. True, and they are to meddle with none but the Prince's

subjects. You shall also make no noise in the streets; for for

the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable, and not to be endured.

2. Watch. We will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch.

Dog. Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I

cannot see how sleeping should offend. Only have a care that your

bills be not stol'n. Well, you are to call at all the alehouses

and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

2. Watch. How if they will not?

Dog. Why then, let them alone till they are sober. If they make you

not then the better answer, You may say they are not the men you took them for.

2. Watch. Well, sir.

Dog. If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your

office, to be no true man; and for such kind of men, the less you

meddle or make with them, why, the more your honesty.

2. Watch. If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

Dog. Truly, by your office you may; but I think they that touch

pitch will be defil'd. The most peaceable way for you, if you do

take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is, and steal

out of your company.

Verg. You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

Dog. Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much

more a man who

hath any honesty in him.

Verg. If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the

nurse and bid her still it.

2. Watch. How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

Dog. Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with

crying; for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will

never answer a calf when he bleats.

Verg. 'Tis very true.

Dog. This is the end of the charge: you, constable, are to present

the Prince's own person. If you meet the Prince in the night,

you may stay him.

Verg. Nay, by'r lady, that I think 'a cannot.

Dog. Five shillings to one on't with any man that knows the

statutes, he may stay him! Marry, not without the Prince be

willing; for indeed the watch ought to offend no man, and it is

an offence to stay a man against his will.

Verg. By'r lady, I think it be so.

Dog. Ha, ah, ha! Well, masters, good night. An there be any matter

of weight chances, call up me. Keep your fellows' counsels and

your own, and good night. Come, neighbour.

2. Watch. Well, masters, we hear our charge. Let us go sit here

upon the church bench till two, and then all to bed.

Dog. One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you watch about

Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there tomorrow,

there is a great coil to-night. Adieu. Be vigilant, I beseech

you.

and Verges].

Exeunt [Dogberry

Enter Borachio and Conrade.

Bora. What, Conrade!

2. Watch. [aside] Peace! stir not!

Bora. Conrade, I say!

Con. Here, man. I am at thy elbow.

Bora. Mass, and my elbow itch'd! I thought there  
would a scab  
follow.

Con. I will owe thee an answer for that; and now  
forward with thy  
tale.

Bora. Stand thee close then under this penthouse,  
for it drizzles  
rain, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all  
to thee.

2. Watch. [aside] Some treason, masters. Yet stand  
close.

Bora. Therefore know I have earned of Don John a  
thousand ducats.

Con. Is it possible that any villany should be so  
dear?

Bora. Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible  
any villany  
should be so rich; for when rich villains have  
need of poor ones,  
poor ones may make what price they will.

Con. I wonder at it.

Bora. That shows thou art unconfirm'd. Thou knowest  
that the

fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak, is  
nothing to a man.

Con. Yes, it is apparel.

Bora. I mean the fashion.

Con. Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

Bora. Tush! I may as well say the fool's the fool.  
But seest thou

not what a deformed thief this fashion is?

2. Watch. [aside] I know that Deformed. 'A has been  
a vile thief

this seven year; 'a goes up and down like a  
gentleman. I remember  
his name.

Bora. Didst thou not hear somebody?

Con. No; 'twas the vane on the house.



Bora. Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief  
this fashion is?

how giddily 'a turns about all the hot-bloods  
between fourteen

and five-and-thirty? sometimes fashioning them  
like Pharaoh's

soldiers in the reechy painting, sometime like  
god Bel's priests

in the old church window, sometime like the  
shaven Hercules in

the smirch'd worm-eaten tapestry, where his  
codpiece seems as

massy as his club?

Con. All this I see; and I see that the fashion  
wears out more

apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself  
giddy with the

fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy  
tale into telling

me of the fashion?

Bora. Not so neither. But know that I have to-night  
wooded Margaret,

the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero.  
She leans me

out at her mistress' chamber window, bids me a  
thousand times

good night--I tell this tale vilely; I should  
first tell thee how

the Prince, Claudio and my master, planted and  
placed and

possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in  
the orchard this

amiable encounter.

Con. And thought they Margaret was Hero?

Bora. Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio; but  
the devil my

master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his  
oaths, which

first possess'd them, partly by the dark night,  
which did deceive

them, but chiefly by my villany, which did  
confirm any slander

that Don John had made, away went Claudio  
enrag'd; swore he would

meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at

the temple, and

there, before the whole congregation, shame her  
with what he saw

o'ernight and send her home again without a  
husband.

2. Watch. We charge you in the Prince's name stand!

1. Watch. Call up the right Master Constable. We  
have here

recover'd the most dangerous piece of lechery  
that ever was known

in the commonwealth.

2. Watch. And one Deformed is one of them. I know  
him; 'a wears a

lock.

Con. Masters, masters--

1. Watch. You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I  
warrant you.

Con. Masters--

2. Watch. Never speak, we charge you. Let us obey  
you to go with

us.

Bora. We are like to prove a goodly commodity,  
being taken up of

these men's bills.

Con. A commodity in question, I warrant you. Come,  
we'll obey you.

Exeunt.

#### Scene IV.

A Room in Leonato's house.

Enter Hero, and Margaret and Ursula.

Hero. Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice and  
desire her to rise.

Urs. I will, lady.

Hero. And bid her come hither.

Urs.

Well.

[Exit.]

Marg. Troth, I think your other rebato were better.

Hero. No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

Marg. By my troth, 's not so good, and I warrant  
your cousin will

say so.

Hero. My cousin's a fool, and thou art another.

I'll wear none but  
this.

Marg. I like the new tire within excellently, if  
the hair were a  
thought browner; and your gown's a most rare  
fashion, i' faith.

I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they  
praise so.

Hero. O, that exceeds, they say.

Marg. By my troth, 's but a nightgown in respect of  
yours--

cloth-o'-gold and cuts, and lac'd with silver,  
set with pearls  
down sleeves, side-sleeves, and skirts, round  
underborne with  
a blush tinsel. But for a fine, quaint, graceful,  
and excellent  
fashion, yours is worth ten on't.

Hero. God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is  
exceeding heavy.

Marg. 'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

Hero. Fie upon thee! art not ashamed?

Marg. Of what, lady? of speaking honourably? Is not  
marriage

honourable in a beggar? Is not your lord  
honourable without

marriage? I think you would have me say, 'saving  
your reverence,

a husband.' An bad thinking do not wrest true  
speaking, I'll

offend nobody. Is there any harm in 'the heavier  
for a husband'?

None, I think, an it be the right husband and the  
right wife.

Otherwise 'tis light, and not heavy. Ask my Lady  
Beatrice else.

Here she comes.

Enter Beatrice.

Hero. Good morrow, coz.

Beat. Good morrow, sweet Hero.

Hero. Why, how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?

Beat. I am out of all other tune, methinks.

Marg. Clap's into 'Light o' love.' That goes

without a burden. Do

you sing it, and I'll dance it.

Beat. Yea, 'Light o' love' with your heels! then,  
if your husband

have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no  
barnes.

Marg. O illegitimate construction! I scorn that  
with my heels.

Beat. 'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin; 'tis time  
you were ready.

By my troth, I am exceeding ill. Hey-ho!

Marg. For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

Beat. For the letter that begins them all, H.

Marg. Well, an you be not turn'd Turk, there's no  
more sailing by  
the star.

Beat. What means the fool, trow?

Marg. Nothing I; but God send every one their  
heart's desire!

Hero. These gloves the Count sent me, they are an  
excellent  
perfume.

Beat. I am stuff'd, cousin; I cannot smell.

Marg. A maid, and stuff'd! There's goodly catching  
of cold.

Beat. O, God help me! God help me! How long have  
you profess'd  
apprehension?

Marg. Ever since you left it. Doth not my wit  
become me rarely?

Beat. It is not seen enough. You should wear it in  
your cap. By my  
troth, I am sick.

Marg. Get you some of this distill'd carduus  
benedictus and lay it

to your heart. It is the only thing for a qualm.

Hero. There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

Beat. Benedictus? why benedictus? You have some  
moral in this

'benedictus.'

Marg. Moral? No, by my troth, I have no moral  
meaning; I meant

plain holy thistle. You may think perchance that  
I think you are

in love. Nay, by'r lady, I am not such a fool to

think what I

list; nor I list not to think what I can; nor  
indeed I cannot

think, if I would think my heart out of thinking,  
that you are in

love, or that you will be in love, or that you  
can be in love.

Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he  
become a man. He

swore he would never marry; and yet now in  
despite of his heart

he eats his meat without grudging; and how you  
may be converted I

know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as  
other women do.

Beat. What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

Marg. Not a false gallop.

Enter Ursula.

Urs. Madam, withdraw. The Prince, the Count,  
Signior Benedick, Don

John, and all the gallants of the town are come  
to fetch you to  
church.

Hero. Help to dress me, good coz, good Meg, good  
Ursula.

[Exeunt.]

Scene V.

The hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato and the Constable [Dogberry]  
and the

Headborough [verges].

Leon. What would you with me, honest neighbour?

Dog. Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with  
you that decerns  
you nearly.

Leon. Brief, I pray you; for you see it is a busy  
time with me.

Dog. Marry, this it is, sir.

Verg. Yes, in truth it is, sir.

Leon. What is it, my good friends?

Dog. Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the

matter--an old

man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt as, God help, I would

desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

Verg. Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an

old man and no honester than I.

Dog. Comparisons are odorous. Palabras, neighbour Verges.

Leon. Neighbours, you are tedious.

Dog. It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor Duke's

officers; but truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a

king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

Leon. All thy tediousness on me, ah?

Dog. Yea, in 'twere a thousand pound more than 'tis; for I hear as

good exclamation on your worship as of any man in the city; and

though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

Verg. And so am I.

Leon. I would fain know what you have to say.

Verg. Marry, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's

presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in

Messina.

Dog. A good old man, sir; he will be talking. As they say, 'When

the age is in, the wit is out.' God help us! it is a world to

see! Well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges. Well, God's a good

man. An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest

soul, i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread; but

God is to be worshipp'd; all men are not alike, alas, good

neighbour!

Leon. Indeed, neighbour, he comes too short of you.

Dog. Gifts that God gives.

Leon. I must leave you.

Dog. One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed  
comprehended two  
aspicious persons, and we would have them this  
morning examined  
before your worship.

Leon. Take their examination yourself and bring it  
me. I am now in  
great haste, as it may appear unto you.

Dog. It shall be suffigance.

Leon. Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

[Enter a Messenger.]

Mess. My lord, they stay for you to give your  
daughter to her  
husband.

Leon. I'll wait upon them. I am ready.

[Exeunt Leonato and  
Messenger.]

Dog. Go, good partner, go get you to Francis  
Seacoal; bid him bring  
his pen and inkhorn to the jail. We are now to  
examination these  
men.

Verg. And we must do it wisely.

Dog. We will spare for no wit, I warrant you.  
Here's that shall

drive some of them to a non-come. Only get the  
learned writer to  
set down our excommunication, and meet me at the  
jail.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV. Scene I.

A church.

Enter Don Pedro, [John the] Bastard, Leonato, Friar  
[Francis],

Claudio, Benedick, Hero, Beatrice, [and  
Attendants].

Leon. Come, Friar Francis, be brief. Only to the  
plain form of  
marriage, and you shall recount their particular

duties

afterwards.

Friar. You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

Claud. No.

Leon. To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her.

Friar. Lady, you come hither to be married to this count?

Hero. I do.

Friar. If either of you know any inward impediment why you should

not be conjoined, I charge you on your souls to utter it.

Claud. Know you any, Hero?

Hero. None, my lord.

Friar. Know you any, Count?

Leon. I dare make his answer--none.

Claud. O, what men dare do! what men may do! what men daily do, not

knowing what they do!

Bene. How now? interjections? Why then, some be of laughing, as,

ah, ha, he!

Claud. Stand thee by, friar. Father, by your leave:

Will you with free and unconstrained soul

Give me this maid your daughter?

Leon. As freely, son, as God did give her me.

Claud. And what have I to give you back whose worth

May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

Pedro. Nothing, unless you render her again.

Claud. Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.

There, Leonato, take her back again.

Give not this rotten orange to your friend.

She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!

O, what authority and show of truth

Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

Comes not that blood as modest evidence

To witness simple virtue, Would you not swear,

All you that see her, that she were a maid

By these exterior shows? But she is none:

She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;

Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

Leon. What do you mean, my lord?



Claud. Not to be married,  
Not to knit my soul to an approved wanton.

Leon. Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,  
Have vanquish'd the resistance of her youth  
And made defeat of her virginity--

Claud. I know what you would say. If I have known  
her,

You will say she did embrace me as a husband,  
And so extenuate the forehead sin.

No, Leonato,  
I never tempted her with word too large,  
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd  
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

Hero. And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

Claud. Out on the seeming! I will write against it.

You seem to me as Dian in her orb,  
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;  
But you are more intemperate in your blood  
Than Venus, or those pamp'ring animals  
That rage in savage sensuality.

Hero. Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

Leon. Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

Pedro. What should I speak?

I stand dishonour'd that have gone about  
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

Leon. Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

John. Sir, they are spoken, and these things are  
true.

Bene. This looks not like a nuptial.

Hero. 'True!' O God!

Claud. Leonato, stand I here?

Is this the Prince, Is this the Prince's brother?

Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own?

Leon. All this is so; but what of this, my lord?

Claud. Let me but move one question to your  
daughter,

And by that fatherly and kindly power  
That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

Leon. I charge thee do so, as thou art my child.

Hero. O, God defend me! How am I beset!

What kind of catechising call you this?

Claud. To make you answer truly to your name.

Hero. Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name

With any just reproach?

Claud. Marry, that can Hero!

Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.  
What man was he talk'd with you yesternight,  
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?  
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

Hero. I talk'd with no man at that hour, my lord.

Pedro. Why, then are you no maiden. Leonato,  
I am sorry you must hear. Upon my honour,  
Myself, my brother, and this grieved Count  
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night  
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window,  
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,  
Confess'd the vile encounters they have had  
A thousand times in secret.

John. Fie, fie! they are not to be nam'd, my lord--  
Not to be spoke of;

There is not chastity, enough in language  
Without offence to utter them. Thus, pretty lady,  
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

Claud. O Hero! what a Hero hadst thou been  
If half thy outward graces had been plac'd  
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!  
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair!

Farewell,

Thou pure impiety and impious purity!  
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,  
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,  
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,  
And never shall it more be gracious.

Leon. Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?

[Hero

swoons.]

Beat. Why, how now, cousin? Wherefore sink you down?

John. Come let us go. These things, come thus to  
light,

Smother her spirits up.

[Exeunt Don Pedro, Don Juan,

and Claudio.]

Bene. How doth the lady?

Beat. Dead, I think. Help, uncle!

Hero! why, Hero! Uncle! Signior Benedick! Friar!

Leon. O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!

Death is the fairest cover for her shame  
That may be wish'd for.

Beat. How now, cousin Hero?

Friar. Have comfort, lady.

Leon. Dost thou look up?

Friar. Yea, wherefore should she not?

Leon. Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing  
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny  
The story that is printed in her blood?  
Do not live, Hero; do not ope thine eyes;  
For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,  
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy

shames,

Myself would on the rearward of reproaches  
Strike at thy life. Griev'd I, I had but one?  
Child I for that at frugal nature's frame?  
O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?  
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?  
Why had I not with charitable hand  
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,  
Who smirched thus and mir'd with infamy,  
I might have said, 'No part of it is mine;  
This shame derives itself from unknown loins'?  
But mine, and mine I lov'd, and mine I prais'd,  
And mine that I was proud on--mine so much  
That I myself was to myself not mine,  
Valuing of her--why, she, O, she is fall'n  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,  
And salt too little which may season give  
To her foul tainted flesh!

Bene. Sir, sir, be patient.

For my part, I am so attir'd in wonder,  
I know not what to say.

Beat. O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

Bene. Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

Beat. No, truly, not; although, until last night,  
I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow

Leon. Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made  
Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron!  
Would the two princes lie? and Claudio lie,  
Who lov'd her so that, speaking of her foulness,  
Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

Friar. Hear me a little;

For I have only been silent so long,  
And given way unto this course of fortune,  
By noting of the lady. I have mark'd  
A thousand blushing apparitions  
To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames

In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,  
And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire  
To burn the errors that these princes hold  
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool;  
Trust not my reading nor my observation,  
Which with experimental seal doth warrant  
The tenure of my book; trust not my age,  
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,  
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here  
Under some biting error.

Leon. Friar, it cannot be.

Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left  
Is that she will not add to her damnation  
A sin of perjury: she not denies it.

Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse  
That which appears in proper nakedness?

Friar. Lady, what man is he you are accus'd of?

Hero. They know that do accuse me; I know none.

If I know more of any man alive  
Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,  
Let all my sins lack mercy! O my father,  
Prove you that any man with me convers'd  
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight  
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,  
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

Friar. There is some strange misprision in the  
princes.

Bene. Two of them have the very bent of honour;  
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,  
The practice of it lives in John the bastard,  
Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

Leon. I know not. If they speak but truth of her,  
These hands shall tear her. If they wrong her  
honour,

The proudest of them shall well hear of it.  
Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,  
Nor age so eat up my invention,  
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,  
Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,  
But they shall find awak'd in such a kind  
Both strength of limb and policy of mind,  
Ability in means, and choice of friends,  
To quit me of them thoroughly.

Friar. Pause awhile

And let my counsel sway you in this case.

Your daughter here the princes left for dead,  
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,  
And publish it that she is dead indeed;  
Maintain a mourning ostentation,  
And on your family's old monument  
Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites  
That appertain unto a burial.

Leon. What shall become of this? What will this do?

Friar. Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf

Change slander to remorse. That is some good.  
But not for that dream I on this strange course,  
But on this travail look for greater birth.  
She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,  
Upon the instant that she was accus'd,  
Shall be lamented, pitied, and excus'd  
Of every hearer; for it so falls out  
That what we have we prize not to the worth  
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost,  
Why, then we rack the value, then we find  
The virtue that possession would not show us  
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.  
When he shall hear she died upon his words,  
Th' idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
Into his study of imagination,  
And every lovely organ of her life  
Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,  
More moving, delicate, and full of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of his soul  
Than when she liv'd indeed. Then shall he mourn  
(If ever love had interest in his liver)  
And wish he had not so accused her--  
No, though be thought his accusation true.  
Let this be so, and doubt not but success  
Will fashion the event in better shape  
Than I can lay it down in likelihood.  
But if all aim but this be levell'd false,  
The supposition of the lady's death  
Will quench the wonder of her infamy.  
And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,  
As best befits her wounded reputation,  
In some reclusive and religious life,  
Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.  
Bene. Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you;  
And though you know my inwardness and love  
Is very much unto the Prince and Claudio,

Yet, by mine honour, I will deal in this  
As secretly and justly as your soul  
Should with your body.

Leon. Being that I flow in grief,  
The smallest twine may lead me.

Friar. 'Tis well consented. Presently away;  
For to strange sores strangely they strain the  
cure.

Come, lady, die to live. This wedding day  
Perhaps is but prolong'd. Have patience and  
endure.

Exeunt [all but Benedick and  
Beatrice].

Bene. Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

Beat. Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

Bene. I will not desire that.

Beat. You have no reason. I do it freely.

Bene. Surely I do believe your fair cousin is  
wronged.

Beat. Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that  
would right  
her!

Bene. Is there any way to show such friendship?

Beat. A very even way, but no such friend.

Bene. May a man do it?

Beat. It is a man's office, but not yours.

Bene. I do love nothing in the world so well as  
you. Is not that  
strange?

Beat. As strange as the thing I know not. It were  
as possible for

me to say I loved nothing so well as you. But  
believe me not; and

yet I lie not. I confess nothing, nor I deny  
nothing. I am sorry  
for my cousin.

Bene. By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

Beat. Do not swear, and eat it.

Bene. I will swear by it that you love me, and I  
will make him eat

it that says I love not you.

Beat. Will you not eat your word?

Bene. With no sauce that can be devised to it. I  
protest I love  
thee.

Beat. Why then, God forgive me!

Bene. What offence, sweet Beatrice?

Beat. You have stayed me in a happy hour. I was  
about to protest I  
loved you.

Bene. And do it with all thy heart.

Beat. I love you with so much of my heart that none  
is left to  
protest.

Bene. Come, bid me do anything for thee.

Beat. Kill Claudio.

Bene. Ha! not for the wide world!

Beat. You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

Bene. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

Beat. I am gone, though I am here. There is no love  
in you. Nay, I  
pray you let me go.

Bene. Beatrice--

Beat. In faith, I will go.

Bene. We'll be friends first.

Beat. You dare easier be friends with me than fight  
with mine  
enemy.

Bene. Is Claudio thine enemy?

Beat. Is 'a not approved in the height a villain,  
that hath  
slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O  
that I were a  
man! What? bear her in hand until they come to  
take hands, and  
then with public accusation, uncover'd slander,  
unmitigated  
rancour--O God, that I were a man! I would eat  
his heart in the  
market place.

Bene. Hear me, Beatrice!

Beat. Talk with a man out at a window!-a proper  
saying!

Bene. Nay but Beatrice--

Beat. Sweet Hero! she is wrong'd, she is sland'ed,  
she is undone.

Bene. Beat--

Beat. Princes and Counties! Surely a princely  
testimony, a goodly  
count, Count Comfekt, a sweet gallant surely! O

that I were a man  
for his sake! or that I had any friend would be a  
man for my  
sake! But manhood is melted into cursies, valour  
into compliment,  
and men are only turn'd into tongue, and trim  
ones too. He is now  
as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie, and  
swears it. I  
cannot be a man with wishing; therefore I will  
die a woman with  
grieving.

Bene. Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love  
thee.

Beat. Use it for my love some other way than  
swearing by it.

Bene. Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath  
wrong'd Hero?

Beat. Yea, as sure is I have a thought or a soul.

Bene. Enough, I am engag'd, I will challenge him. I  
will kiss your

hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio  
shall render me a

dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me.  
Go comfort your

cousin. I must say she is dead-and so farewell.

[Exeunt.]

Scene II.

A prison.

Enter the Constables [Dogberry and Verges] and  
the Sexton,

in gowns, [and the Watch, with Conrade and]  
Borachio.

Dog. Is our whole dissembly appear'd?

Verg. O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

Sex. Which be the malefactors?

Dog. Marry, that am I and my partner.

Verg. Nay, that's certain. We have the exhibition  
to examine.

Sex. But which are the offenders that are to be  
examined? let them

come before Master Constable.

Dog. Yea, marry, let them come before me. What is



your name,  
friend?

Bor. Borachio.

Dog. Pray write down Borachio. Yours, sirrah?

Con. I am a gentleman, sir, and my name is Conrade.

Dog. Write down Master Gentleman Conrade. Masters,  
do you serve

God?

Both. Yea, sir, we hope.

Dog. Write down that they hope they serve God; and  
write God first,

for God defend but God should go before such  
villains! Masters,

it is proved already that you are little better  
than false

knaves, and it will go near to be thought so  
shortly. How answer

you for yourselves?

Con. Marry, sir, we say we are none.

Dog. A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you; but I  
will go about

with him. Come you hither, sirrah. A word in your  
ear. Sir, I say

to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

Bora. Sir, I say to you we are none.

Dog. Well, stand aside. Fore God, they are both in  
a tale.

Have you writ down that they are none?

Sex. Master Constable, you go not the way to  
examine. You must call

forth the watch that are their accusers.

Dog. Yea, marry, that's the eftest way. Let the  
watch come forth.

Masters, I charge you in the Prince's name accuse  
these men.

1. Watch. This man said, sir, that Don John the  
Prince's brother  
was a villain.

Dog. Write down Prince John a villain. Why, this is  
flat perjury,

to call a prince's brother villain.

Bora. Master Constable--

Dog. Pray thee, fellow, peace. I do not like thy  
look, I promise  
thee.

Sex. What heard you him say else?

2. Watch. Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats of Don John

for accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully.

Dog. Flat burglary as ever was committed.

Verg. Yea, by th' mass, that it is.

Sex. What else, fellow?

1. Watch. And that Count Claudio did mean, upon his words, to

disgrace Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her.

Dog. O villain! thou wilt be condemn'd into everlasting redemption

for this.

Sex. What else?

Watchmen. This is all.

Sex. And this is more, masters, than you can deny. Prince John is

this morning secretly stol'n away. Hero was in this manner

accus'd, in this manner refus'd, and upon the grief of this

suddenly died. Master Constable, let these men be bound and

brought to Leonato's. I will go before and show him their

examination.

[Exit.]

Dog. Come, let them be opinion'd.

Verg. Let them be in the hands--

Con. Off, coxcomb!

Dog. God's my life, where's the sexton? Let him write down the

Prince's officer coxcomb. Come, bind them.--Thou naughty varlet!

Con. Away! you are an ass, you are an ass.

Dog. Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my

years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters,

remember that I am an ass. Though it be not written down, yet

forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of

piety, as shall be prov'd upon thee by good

witness. I am a wise  
fellow; and which is more, an officer; and which  
is more, a  
householder; and which is more, as pretty a piece  
of flesh as any  
is in Messina, and one that knows the law, go to!  
and a rich  
fellow enough, go to! and a fellow that hath had  
losses; and one  
that hath two gowns and everything handsome about  
him. Bring him  
away. O that I had been writ down an ass!

Exeunt.

ACT V. Scene I.

The street, near Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato and his brother [ Antonio].

Ant. If you go on thus, you will kill yourself,  
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second grief  
Against yourself.

Leon. I pray thee cease thy counsel,  
Which falls into mine ears as profitless  
As water in a sieve. Give not me counsel,  
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear  
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.  
Bring me a father that so lov'd his child,  
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,  
And bid him speak to me of patience.  
Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,  
And let it answer every strain for strain,  
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,  
In every lineament, branch, shape, and form.  
If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,  
Bid sorrow wag, cry 'hem' when he should groan,  
Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk  
With candle-wasters--bring him yet to me,  
And I of him will gather patience.  
But there is no such man; for, brother, men  
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief  
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,  
Their counsel turns to passion, which before  
Would give preceptual medicine to rage,  
Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,  
Charm ache with air and agony with words.

No, no! 'Tis all men's office to speak patience  
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,  
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency  
To be so moral when he shall endure  
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.  
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Ant. Therein do men from children nothing differ.

Leon. I pray thee peace. I will be flesh and blood;  
For there was never yet philosopher  
That could endure the toothache patiently,  
However they have writ the style of gods  
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

Ant. Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself.

Make those that do offend you suffer too.

Leon. There thou speak'st reason. Nay, I will do so.  
My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;  
And that shall Claudio know; so shall the Prince,  
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

Enter Don Pedro and Claudio.

Ant. Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.

Pedro. Good den, Good den.

Claud. Good day to both of you.

Leon. Hear you, my lords!

Pedro. We have some haste, Leonato.

Leon. Some haste, my lord! well, fare you well, my  
lord.

Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.

Pedro. Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.

Ant. If he could right himself with quarrelling,  
Some of us would lie low.

Claud. Who wrongs him?

Leon. Marry, thou dost wrong me, thou dissembler,  
thou!

Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword;  
I fear thee not.

Claud. Mary, beshrew my hand

If it should give your age such cause of fear.  
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.

Leon. Tush, tush, man! never fleer and jest at me  
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,  
As under privilege of age to brag  
What I have done being young, or what would do,  
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,

Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me  
That I am forc'd to lay my reverence by  
And, with grey hairs and bruise of many days,  
Do challenge thee to trial of a man.  
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;  
Thy slander hath gone through and through her  
heart,

And she lied buried with her ancestors-  
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,  
Save this of hers, fram'd by thy villany!

Claud. My villany?

Leon. Thine, Claudio; thine I say.

Pedro. You say not right, old man

Leon. My lord, my lord,

I'll prove it on his body if he dare,  
Despite his nice fence and his active practice,  
His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.

Claud. Away! I will not have to do with you.

Leon. Canst thou so daff me? Thou hast kill'd my  
child.

If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.  
And. He shall kill two of us, and men indeed  
But that's no matter; let him kill one first.  
Win me and wear me! Let him answer me.  
Come, follow me, boy,. Come, sir boy, come follow

me.

Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence!  
Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

Leon. Brother--

Ant. Content yourself. God knows I lov'd my niece,  
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,  
That dare as well answer a man indeed  
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.  
Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!

Leon. Brother Anthony--

Ant. Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,  
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple,  
Scambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys,  
That lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander,  
Go anticly, show outward hideousness,  
And speak off half a dozen dang'rous words,  
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst;  
And this is all.

Leon. But, brother Anthony--

Ant. Come, 'tis no matter.

Do not you meddle; let me deal in this.

Pedro. Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.

My heart is sorry for your daughter's death;  
But, on my honour, she was charg'd with nothing  
But what was true, and very full of proof.

Leon. My lord, my lord--

Pedro. I will not hear you.

Leon. No? Come, brother, away!--I will be heard.

Ant. And shall, or some of us will smart for it.

Exeunt

ambo.

Enter Benedick.

Pedro. See, see! Here comes the man we went to seek.

Claud. Now, signior, what news?

Bene. Good day, my lord.

Pedro. Welcome, signior. You are almost come to part almost a fray.

Claud. We had lik'd to have had our two noses  
snapp'd off with two  
old men without teeth.

Pedro. Leonato and his brother. What think'st thou?  
Had we fought,

I doubt we should have been too young for them.

Bene. In a false quarrel there is no true valour. I  
came to seek  
you both.

Claud. We have been up and down to seek thee; for  
we are high-proof  
melancholy, and would fain have it beaten away.  
Wilt thou use thy  
wit?

Bene. It is in my scabbard. Shall I draw it?

Pedro. Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

Claud. Never any did so, though very many have been  
beside their

wit. I will bid thee draw, as we do the minstrel--  
draw to  
pleasure us.

Pedro. As I am an honest man, he looks pale. Art  
thou sick or  
angry?

Claud. What, courage, man! What though care kill'd

a cat, thou hast

mettle enough in thee to kill care.

Bene. Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career an  
you charge it

against me. I pray you choose another subject.

Claud. Nay then, give him another staff; this last  
was broke cross.

Pedro. By this light, he changes more and more. I  
think he be angry  
indeed.

Claud. If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.

Bene. Shall I speak a word in your ear?

Claud. God bless me from a challenge!

Bene. [aside to Claudio] You are a villain. I jest  
not; I will make

it good how you dare, with what you dare, and  
when you dare. Do

me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You  
have kill'd a

sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on  
you. Let me hear  
from you.

Claud. Well, I will meet you, so I may have good  
cheer.

Pedro. What, a feast, a feast?

Claud. I' faith, I thank him, he hath bid me to a  
calve's head and

a capon, the which if I do not carve most  
curiously, say my

knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?

Bene. Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

Pedro. I'll tell thee how Beatrice prais'd thy wit  
the other day. I

said thou hadst a fine wit: 'True,' said she, 'a  
fine little

one.' 'No,' said I, 'a great wit.' 'Right,' says  
she, 'a great

gross one.' 'Nay,' said I, 'a good wit.' 'Just,'  
said she, 'it

hurts nobody.' 'Nay,' said I, 'the gentleman is  
wise.' 'Certain,'

said she, a wise gentleman.' 'Nay,' said I, 'he  
hath the

tongues.' 'That I believe' said she, 'for he  
swore a thing to me

on Monday night which he forswore on Tuesday morning. There's a double tongue; there's two tongues.' Thus did she an hour together transshape thy particular virtues. Yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the proper'st man in Italy.

Claud. For the which she wept heartily and said she cared not.

Pedro. Yea, that she did; but yet, for all that, an if she did not

hate him deadly, she would love him dearly. The old man's daughter told us all.

Claud. All, all! and moreover, God saw him when he was hid in the garden.

Pedro. But when shall we set the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

Claud. Yea, and text underneath, 'Here dwells Benedick, the married man'?

Bene. Fare you well, boy; you know my mind. I will leave you now to

your gossiplike humour. You break jests as braggards do their

blades, which God be thanked hurt not. My lord, for your many

courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your company. Your

brother the bastard is fled from Messina. You have among you

kill'd a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he

and I shall meet; and till then peace be with him.

[Exit.]

Pedro. He is in earnest.

Claud. In most profound earnest; and, I'll warrant you, for the

love of Beatrice.

Pedro. And hath challeng'd thee.

Claud. Most sincerely.

Pedro. What a pretty thing man is when he goes in



his doublet and  
hose and leaves off his wit!

Enter Constables [Dogberry and Verges, with the  
Watch, leading]

Conrade and Borachio.

Claud. He is then a giant to an ape; but then is an  
ape a doctor to  
such a man.

Pedro. But, soft you, let me be! Pluck up, my  
heart, and be sad!

Did he not say my brother was fled?

Dog. Come you, sir. If justice cannot tame you, she  
shall ne'er

weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, an you be  
a cursing

hypocrite once, you must be look'd to.

Pedro. How now? two of my brother's men bound?  
Borachio one.

Claud. Hearken after their offence, my lord.

Pedro. Officers, what offence have these men done?

Dog. Marry, sir, they have committed false report;  
moreover, they

have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are  
slanders; sixth and

lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they  
have verified

unjust things; and to conclude, they are lying  
knaves.

Pedro. First, I ask thee what they have done;  
thirdly, I ask thee

what's their offence; sixth and lastly, why they  
are committed;

and to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

Claud. Rightly reasoned, and in his own division;  
and by my troth

there's one meaning well suited.

Pedro. Who have you offended, masters, that you are  
thus bound to

your answer? This learned constable is too  
cunning to be

understood. What's your offence?

Bora. Sweet Prince, let me go no farther to mine  
answer. Do you

hear me, and let this Count kill me. I have  
deceived even your  
very eyes. What your wisdoms could not discover,  
these shallow  
fools have brought to light, who in the night  
overheard me  
confessing to this man, how Don John your brother  
incensed me to  
slander the Lady Hero; how you were brought into  
the orchard and  
saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments; how you  
disgrac'd her  
when you should marry her. My villany they have  
upon record,  
which I had rather seal with my death than repeat  
over to my  
shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's  
false  
accusation; and briefly, I desire nothing but the  
reward of a  
villain.

Pedro. Runs not this speech like iron through your  
blood?

Claud. I have drunk poison whiles he utter'd it.

Pedro. But did my brother set thee on to this?

Bora. Yea, and paid me richly for the practice of  
it.

Pedro. He is compos'd and fram'd of treachery,  
And fled he is upon this villany.

Claud. Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear  
In the rare semblance that I lov'd it first.

Dog. Come, bring away the plaintiffs. By this time  
our sexton hath

reformed Signior Leonato of the matter. And,  
masters, do not

forget to specify, when time and place shall  
serve, that I am an  
ass.

Verg. Here, here comes Master Signior Leonato, and  
the sexton too.

Enter Leonato, his brother [Antonio], and  
the Sexton.

Leon. Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes,

That, when I note another man like him,  
I may avoid him. Which of these is he?  
Bora. If you would know your wronger, look on me.  
Leon. Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast  
kill'd

Mine innocent child?  
Bora. Yea, even I alone.  
Leon. No, not so, villain! thou beliest thyself.

Here stand a pair of honourable men--  
A third is fled--that had a hand in it.  
I thank you princes for my daughter's death.  
Record it with your high and worthy deeds.  
'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.  
Claud. I know not how to pray your patience;  
Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself;  
Impose me to what penance your invention  
Can lay upon my sin. Yet sinn'd I not  
But in mistaking.

Pedro. By my soul, nor I!  
And yet, to satisfy this good old man,  
I would bend under any heavy weight  
That he'll enjoin me to.

Leon. I cannot bid you bid my daughter live--  
That were impossible; but I pray you both,  
Possess the people in Messina here  
How innocent she died; and if your love  
Can labour aught in sad invention,  
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,  
And sing it to her bones--sing it to-night.  
To-morrow morning come you to my house,  
And since you could not be my son-in-law,  
Be yet my nephew. My brother hath a daughter,  
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,  
And she alone is heir to both of us.  
Give her the right you should have giv'n her  
cousin,  
And so dies my revenge.

Claud. O noble sir!  
Your over-kindness doth wring tears from me.  
I do embrace your offer; and dispose  
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

Leon. To-morrow then I will expect your coming;  
To-night I take my leave. This naughty man  
Shall fact to face be brought to Margaret,  
Who I believe was pack'd in all this wrong,

Hir'd to it by your brother.

Bora. No, by my soul, she was not;

Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me;

But always hath been just and virtuous

In anything that I do know by her.

Dog. Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white and black, this

plaintiff here, the offender, did call me ass. I beseech you let

it be rememb'ed in his punishment. And also the watch heard them

talk of one Deformed. They say he wears a key in his ear, and a

lock hanging by it, and borrows money in God's name, the which he

hath us'd so long and never paid that now men grow hard-hearted

and will lend nothing for God's sake. Pray you examine him upon

that point.

Leon. I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

Dog. Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverent youth,

and I praise God for you.

Leon. There's for thy pains. [Gives money.]

Dog. God save the foundation!

Leon. Go, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thank thee.

Dog. I leave an arrant knave with your worship, which I beseech

your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others.

God keep your worship! I wish your worship well. God restore you

to health! I humbly give you leave to depart; and if a merry

meeting may be wish'd, God prohibit it! Come, neighbour.

Exeunt [Dogberry and Verges].

Leon. Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

Ant. Farewell, my lords. We look for you to-morrow.

Pedro. We will not fall.

Claud. To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

[Exeunt Don Pedro

and Claudio.]

Leon. [to the Watch] Bring you these fellows on.--  
We'll talk with  
Margaret,  
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow.

Exeunt.

Scene II.  
Leonato's orchard.

Enter Benedick and Margaret [meeting].

Bene. Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve  
well at my hands

by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

Marg. Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of  
my beauty?

Bene. In so high a style, Margaret, that no man  
living shall come

over it; for in most comely truth thou deservest  
it.

Marg. To have no man come over me? Why, shall I  
always keep below  
stairs?

Bene. Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth--  
it catches.

Marg. And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils,  
which hit but hurt  
not.

Bene. A most manly wit, Margaret: it will not hurt  
a woman.

And so I pray thee call Beatrice. I give thee the  
bucklers.

Marg. Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our  
own.

Bene. If you use them, Margaret, you must put in  
the pikes with a

vice, and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

Marg. Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I  
think hath legs.

Bene. And therefore will come.

Exit

Margaret.

[Sings] The god of love,  
That sits above  
And knows me, and knows me,

How pitiful I deserve--

I mean in singing; but in loving Leander the good swimmer,

Troilus the first employer of panders, and a whole book full of

these quondam carpet-mongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the

even road of a blank verse--why, they were never so truly turn'd

over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in

rhyme. I have tried. I can find out no rhyme to 'lady' but 'baby'

--an innocent rhyme; for 'scorn,' 'horn'--a hard rhyme; for

'school', 'fool'--a babbling rhyme: very ominous endings! No, I

was not born under a rhyming planet, nor cannot woo in festival terms.

Enter Beatrice.

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I call'd thee?

Beat. Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

Bene. O, stay but till then!

Beat. 'Then' is spoken. Fare you well now. And yet, ere I go, let

me go with that I came for, which is, with knowing what hath

pass'd between you and Claudio.

Bene. Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

Beat. Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul

breath, and foul breath is noisome. Therefore I will depart

unkiss'd.

Bene. Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sense, so

forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio

undergoes my challenge; and either I must shortly

hear from him

or I will subscribe him a coward. And I pray thee  
now tell me,

for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall  
in love with me?

Beat. For them all together, which maintain'd so  
politic a state of

evil that they will not admit any good part to  
intermingle with

them. But for which of my good parts did you  
first suffer love

for me?

Bene. Suffer love!--a good epithet. I do suffer  
love indeed, for I

love thee against my will.

Beat. In spite of your heart, I think. Alas, poor  
heart! If you

spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours,  
for I will never

love that which my friend hates.

Bene. Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

Beat. It appears not in this confession. There's  
not one wise man

among twenty, that will praise himself.

Bene. An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that liv'd  
in the time of

good neighbours. If a man do not erect in this  
age his own tomb

ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument  
than the bell

rings and the widow weeps.

Beat. And how long is that, think you?

Bene. Question: why, an hour in clamour and a  
quarter in rheum.

Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if  
Don Worm (his

conscience) find no impediment to the contrary,  
to be the trumpet

of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much  
for praising

myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is  
praiseworthy. And now

tell me, how doth your cousin?

Beat. Very ill.

Bene. And how do you?

Beat. Very ill too.

Bene. Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I  
leave you too, for  
here comes one in haste.

Enter Ursula.

Urs. Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's  
old coil at home.

It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely  
accus'd, the Prince

and Claudio mightily abus'd, and Don John is the  
author of all,

who is fled and gone. Will you come presently?

Beat. Will you go hear this news, signior?

Bene. I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and  
be buried thy

eyes; and moreover, I will go with thee to thy  
uncle's.

Exeunt.

Scene III.

A churchyard.

Enter Claudio, Don Pedro, and three or four with  
tapers,

[followed by Musicians].

Claud. Is this the monument of Leonato?

Lord. It is, my lord.

Claud. [reads from a scroll]

Epitaph.

Done to death by slanderous tongues

Was the Hero that here lies.

Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,

Gives her fame which never dies.

So the life that died with shame

Lives in death with glorious fame.

Hang thou there upon the tomb,

[Hangs up

the scroll.]

Praising her when I am dumb.

Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn.



Song.

Pardon, goddess of the night,  
Those that slew thy virgin knight;  
For the which, with songs of woe,  
Round about her tomb they go.  
Midnight, assist our moan,  
Help us to sigh and groan  
    Heavily, heavily,  
Graves, yawn and yield your dead,  
Till death be uttered  
    Heavily, heavily.

Claud. Now unto thy bones good night!

Yearly will I do this rite.

Pedro. Good morrow, masters. Put your torches out.

The wolves have prey'd, and look, the gentle day,  
Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about  
Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

Thanks to you all, and leave us. Fare you well.

Claud. Good morrow, masters. Each his several way.

Pedro. Come, let us hence and put on other weeds,  
And then to Leonato's we will go.

Claud. And Hymen now with luckier issue speeds  
Than this for whom we rend'red up this

woe.                   Exeunt.

Scene IV

The hall in Leonato's house.

Enter Leonato, Benedick, [Beatrice,] Margaret,  
Ursula, Antonio, Friar [Francis], Hero.

Friar. Did I not tell you she was innocent?

Leon. So are the Prince and Claudio, who accus'd her  
Upon the error that you heard debated.

But Margaret was in some fault for this,  
Although against her will, as it appears  
In the true course of all the question.

Ant. Well, I am glad that all things sort so well.

Bene. And so am I, being else by faith enforc'd  
To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

Leon. Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,  
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,  
And when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

Ladies.

The Prince and Claudio promis'd by this hour  
To visit me. You know your office, brother:  
You must be father to your brother's daughter,  
And give her to young Claudio.

Ant. Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.

Bene. Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

Friar. To do what, signior?

Bene. To bind me, or undo me--one of them.

Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signior,  
Your niece regards me with an eye of favour.

Leon. That eye my daughter lent her. 'Tis most true.

Bene. And I do with an eye of love requite her.

Leon. The sight whereof I think you had from me,  
From Claudio, and the Prince; but what's your

will?

Bene. Your answer, sir, is enigmatical;

But, for my will, my will is, your good will  
May stand with ours, this day to be conjoin'd  
In the state of honourable marriage;

In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

Leon. My heart is with your liking.

Friar. And my help.

Enter Don Pedro and Claudio and two or three  
other.

Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

Pedro. Good morrow to this fair assembly.

Leon. Good morrow, Prince; good morrow, Claudio.

We here attend you. Are you yet determin'd  
To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

Claud. I'll hold my mind, were she an Ethiope.

Leon. Call her forth, brother. Here's the friar  
ready.

[Exit

Antonio.]

Pedro. Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter  
That you have such a February face,  
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

Claud. I think he thinks upon the savage bull.

Tush, fear not, man! We'll tip thy horns with  
gold,

And all Europa shall rejoice at thee,

As once Europa did at lusty Jove  
When he would play the noble beast in love.  
Bene. Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,  
And some such strange bull leap'd your father's  
cow  
And got a calf in that same noble feat  
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

Enter [Leonato's] brother [Antonio], Hero,  
Beatrice,  
Margaret, Ursula, [the ladies wearing  
masks].

Claud. For this I owe you. Here comes other  
reckonings.

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

Ant. This same is she, and I do give you her.

Claud. Why then, she's mine. Sweet, let me see your  
face.

Leon. No, that you shall not till you take her hand  
Before this friar and swear to marry her.

Claud. Give me your hand before this holy friar.

I am your husband if you like of me.

Hero. And when I liv'd I was your other wife;  
[Unmasks.]

And when you lov'd you were my other husband.

Claud. Another Hero!

Hero. Nothing certainer.

One Hero died defil'd; but I do live,  
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

Pedro. The former Hero! Hero that is dead!

Leon. She died, my lord, but whiles her slander  
liv'd.

Friar. All this amazement can I qualify,  
When, after that the holy rites are ended,  
I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death.  
Meantime let wonder seem familiar,  
And to the chapel let us presently.

Bene. Soft and fair, friar. Which is Beatrice?

Beat. [unmasks] I answer to that name. What is your  
will?

Bene. Do not you love me?

Beat. Why, no; no more than reason.

Bene. Why, then your uncle, and the Prince, and  
Claudio

Have been deceived; for they swore you did.  
Beat. Do not you love me?  
Bene. Troth, no; no more than reason.  
Beat. Why, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula  
Are much deceiv'd; for they did swear you did.  
Bene. They swore that you were almost sick for me.  
Beat. They swore that you were well-nigh dead for  
me.  
Bene. 'Tis no such matter. Then you do not love me?  
Beat. No, truly, but in friendly recompense.  
Leon. Come, cousin, I am sure you love the  
gentleman.  
Claud. And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;  
For here's a paper written in his hand,  
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,  
Fashion'd to Beatrice.  
Hero. And here's another,  
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,  
Containing her affection unto Benedick.  
Bene. A miracle! Here's our own hands against our  
hearts.  
Come, I will have thee; but, by this light, I  
take thee for pity.  
Beat. I would not deny you; but, by this good day,  
I yield upon  
great persuasion, and partly to save your life,  
for I was told  
you were in a consumption.  
Bene. Peace! I will stop your mouth.  
[Kisses her.]  
Beat. I'll tell thee what, Prince: a college of wit-  
crackers cannot  
flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care  
for a satire or  
an epigram? No. If a man will be beaten with  
brains, 'a shall  
wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since  
I do purpose to  
marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that  
the world can say  
against it; and therefore never flout at me for  
what I have said  
against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is  
my conclusion.  
For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten

thee; but in

that thou art like to be my kinsman, live  
unbruis'd, and love my  
cousin.

Claud. I had well hop'd thou wouldst have denied  
Beatrice, that I  
might have cudgell'd thee out of thy single life,  
to make thee a  
double-dealer, which out of question thou wilt be  
if my cousin do  
not look exceeding narrowly to thee.

Bene. Come, come, we are friends. Let's have a  
dance ere we are  
married, that we may lighten our own hearts and  
our wives' heels.

Leon. We'll have dancing afterward.

Bene. First, of my word! Therefore play, music.  
Prince, thou art

sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife! There is  
no staff more  
reverent than one tipp'd with horn.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My lord, your brother John is ta'en in flight,  
And brought with armed men back to Messina.

Bene. Think not on him till to-morrow. I'll devise  
thee brave  
punishments for him. Strike up, pipers!

Dance.

[Exeunt.]



Renaissance Editions